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Aims and Ideals of  
Representative American  
Painters





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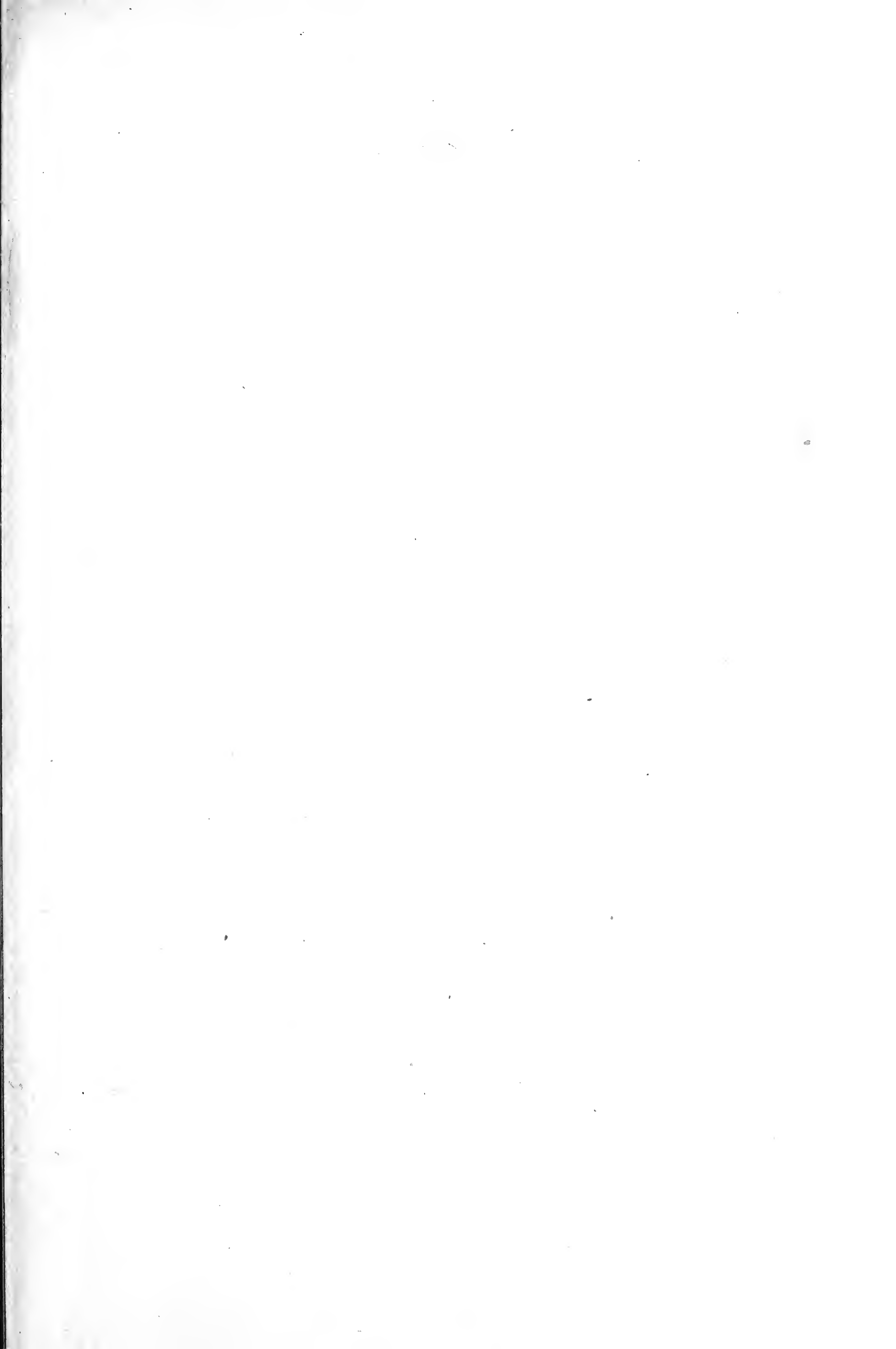
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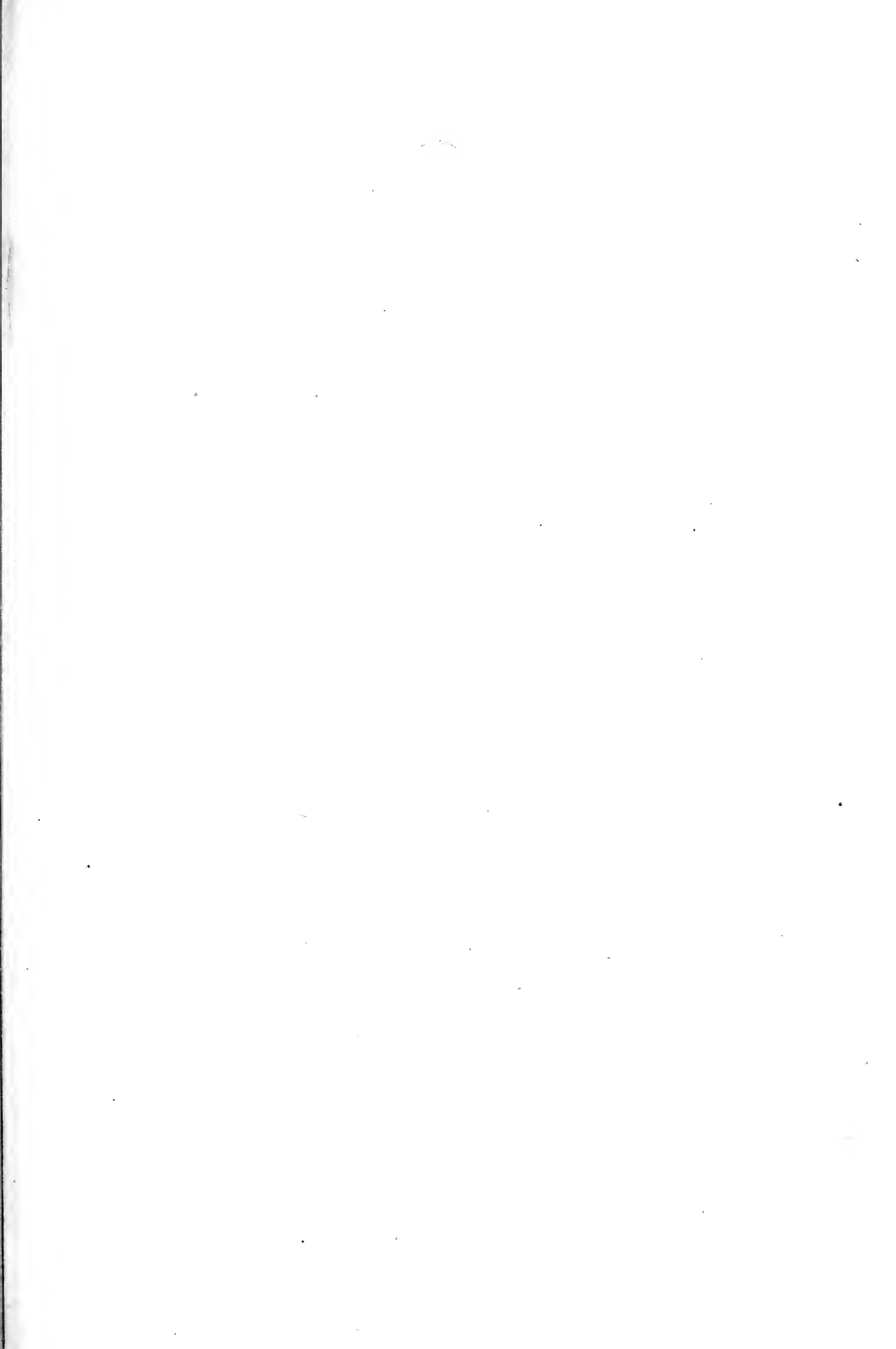














Portrait by Wm. M. Chase.

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AIMS AND IDEALS  
OF  
REPRESENTATIVE AMERICAN  
PAINTERS.



WRITTEN AND ARRANGED

BY

JOHN RUMMELL,

E. M. BERLIN.



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## CONTENTS.

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	PAGE.
I. Art and the human need for beauty,	15
II. Education necessary to the intelligent appreciation of art, . . .	19
III. Art and Nature, . . . . .	21
IV. The Pre-Raphaelite influence upon American painters, . . . . .	27
V. The Barbizon influence introduced by William M. Hunt, . . . . .	28
VI. The Genius of Wyant, . . . . .	33
VII. Inness, the virile and versatile interpreter of the American landscape,	36
VIII. The originality of Whistler, . . . .	44
IX. Whistler's theory of art as exemplified in his "arrangements," "harmonies," and "nocturnes,"	48
X. Whistler as a portrait painter, . . .	58
XI. Sargent: his fortunate career and brilliant achievements, . . . . .	64
XII. Edwin Lord Weeks, an American interpreter of Oriental subjects,	73
XIII. An American painter of French peasants, . . . . .	78
XIV. The idealism of Ridgway Knight, .	81

	PAGE.
XV. An American painter of Dutch subjects, . . . . .	83
XVI. William M. Chase, the master technician, . . . . .	86
XVII. John La Farge, the American colorist, . . . . .	95
XVIII. The great American <i>genre</i> painter, Winslow Homer, . . . . .	106
XIX. Marine, animal, figure and landscape painters, . . . . .	110
XX. Conclusion, . . . . .	113

## INDEX TO PAINTERS.

---


	PAGE.
Abbey, Edwin A., . . . . .	111
Beaux, Cecilia, . . . . .	112
Chase, William M., . . . . .	86
Copley, John Singleton, . . . . .	113
Crane, Bruce, . . . . .	35
Dannat, W. T., . . . . .	111
Davis, Charles H., . . . . .	112
De Haas, M. F. H., . . . . .	110
Dewey, Charles Melville, . . . . .	112
Gifford, R. Swain, . . . . .	111
Harrison, Alexander, . . . . .	110
Hitchcock, George, . . . . .	111
Homer, Winslow, . . . . .	106
Hunt, William Morris, . . . . .	28
Inness, George, . . . . .	36
Inness, George, Jr., . . . . .	111
Knight, D. Ridgway, . . . . .	81
La Farge, John, . . . . .	95
McChesney, Clara, . . . . .	112
McIlhenny, C. Morgan, . . . . .	111
Melchers, J. Gari, . . . . .	83
Millet, F. D., . . . . .	111
Moran, Edward, . . . . .	110

	PAGE.
Moran, Peter, . . . . .	111
Moran, Thomas, . . . . .	112
Mosler, Henry, . . . . .	111
Murphy, J. Francis, . . . . .	112
Nicholls, Rhoda Holmes, . . . . .	112
Pearce, Charles Sprague, . . . . .	78
Richards, W. T., . . . . .	110
Sargent, John Singer, . . . . .	64
Shannon, J. J., . . . . .	111
Sherwood, Rosina, . . . . .	112
Stuart, Gilbert, . . . . .	113
Tryon, D. W., . . . . .	111
Vedder, Elihu, . . . . .	111
Weeks, Edwin Lord, . . . . .	73
Whistler, James McNeill, . . . . .	44
Wiggins, Carleton, . . . . .	111
Wyant, Alexander H., . . . . .	33



## INTRODUCTION.

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HE constantly growing interest in American art has been thought a sufficient reason for publishing the present essay on the subject. The purpose here, however, has not been to chronicle the lives and works of our American painters, but rather to explain briefly the philosophy of art in general and the peculiar province of painting as a medium for æsthetic enjoyment, in order thereby to prepare the way for a clearer understanding

of the aims and theories of our leading American painters, and to make possible a fairly correct appreciation of their originality, their high ideals and their successful achievements. Special consideration has been given to William Morris Hunt, who brought the Barbizon influence to America; to James McNeill Whistler, the truest apostle of "art for art's sake"; to George Inness, the virile and versatile interpreter of the American landscape; to John La Farge, the preëminent American colorist; to William M. Chase, the master technician; and to Winslow Homer, the most American of all our

painters. Somewhat briefer treatment has been given to other distinguished artists, and the essay concludes with an estimate of America's place in the world of art to-day and its prospective rank in the future.

E. M. BERLIN.







**Portrait by Cecilia Beaux.**

## I.



LESS than a score of years ago Matthew Arnold criticised our American life as being uninteresting. The polit-

Art and the human  
need for beauty.

ical and social problems in our country, he said, we have successfully solved — for our political system works smoothly and our social system is quite free from troublesome class distinctions. But the human problem we have not solved. We have not as yet so shaped our life and our institutions as to satisfy the human need for beauty. Our cities and towns are for the most part unattractive, even their names being generally inappropriate or ugly. Our artists prefer to live in Europe. While traveling in this country, Mr. Arnold met a German portrait painter, who was thriving here, and asked him how he liked America. The German replied, “How *can* an artist like it?”

Now, whatever may be thought of Mr. Arnold's criticism, whether or not it is true that as a nation we are not distinguished for any strong sense of the beautiful, it is yet equally true that there have arisen among us during the last century many individuals possessed of the most passionate love of beauty, and the genius to give it an original form of expression. American painters and sculptors have for years been famous in Europe, where art is best understood and most appreciated. That their own countrymen have honored them less points, no doubt, to an imperfectly developed state of the artistic sense of the majority of the American people, and would seem to justify the charge made against us by our English critic. On the other hand, there are intelligent Americans who affect to speak slightly of our native artists, and seem to think that our painters have produced, as yet, very little that is original or important. A better understanding of



art in general and a fuller knowledge of the achievements of our American artists would dispel any such opinion. Happily there is now an awakening in America to the need of a better acquaintance with art. We are learning to recognize the dignified and significant place that art must always hold in the life of a truly civilized people. The love of art is the love of beauty, and the love of beauty is the love of perfection. Whoever, therefore, inculcates the love of art inculcates also that love of perfection which insures the steady advancement and uplifting of the human race.

As a nation we are fortunate, therefore, to have already so much that is valuable in our own art with which to educate our æsthetic tastes and refine our artistic judgment. It is our duty, too, to know more about what our own artists have done and are doing. It is only when the interest in art has become general and the enthusiasm strong

that there is created an atmosphere in which artists can thrive and exert their beneficent influence on the community in which they live.

## II.



THE term "art," in its broadest sense, includes music, eloquence, poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture.

Education  
necessary to the  
intelligent appre-  
ciation of art.

In our language it often has a restricted application to painting alone. No branch of the Anglo-Saxon race has as yet achieved anything very considerable in the art of music. What *our* branch of the race has done in poetry and oratory every intelligent American knows. But not every American knows what our artists have produced in painting, sculpture and architecture. We have sculptors and architects of genius, but it is in painting that American artistic genius has attained by far the greatest success. In this essay we shall confine ourselves to the study of American painters, their aims and their works.

Fully to appreciate any form of art, whether it be music, poetry, painting,

sculpture or architecture, it is necessary to have at least a clear knowledge of the fundamental principles that underlie all the arts, if not also a certain degree of technical training. The vast general public, whose perception of beauty has received little or no education whatever, fails utterly to understand the truly great artist, and delights chiefly in that which is meretricious and commonplace and vulgar. How often do we hear people say, "I don't know anything about painting, but I know what I like." Then, after having disqualified themselves as critics by this confession they proceed arrogantly to pick flaws in the work of some great master, or offer wholly inconsequential reasons for admiring the superficial and conventional effort of a mere shallow painter-man. Only a fair amount of instruction in the theory of art would often convert such arrogance into admiring humility and such foolish admiration into intelligent distrust.

### III.



It is a common conception Art and Nature. that as art is an imitation of Nature, the more perfect the imitation the more perfect the art. Let us pause for a moment to consider this proposition, to see if it be true, and if not true, let us inquire what the purpose of art really is; it will help us the better to understand the aims and excellencies of the artists of whom we are about to speak.

It cannot be denied that it is the business of the artist to imitate Nature. If he does not study Nature faithfully, and keep in close touch with her, he is sure to fall into gross exaggerations, eccentricities and mannerisms. The history of art shows plainly that whenever artists no longer take their inspiration from Nature, their art begins to decline. It is the besetting danger of the artist that, as he becomes master of the technique

of his art, he may formulate a fixed method of doing his work, and fall into a habit of imitating his own early successes ; and, as the imitation is less perfect than the thing imitated, his art becomes stereotyped, mannered and lifeless. Michael Angelo himself, in his old age, fell into this error

But if the artist's only safety lies in copying Nature, are we to conclude, therefore, that exact imitation is the method whereby he attains the best results ? If so, we might also conclude that the artist's occupation would soon be gone, for it is said to be possible now to photograph not only the forms in Nature but the color as well. We know, however, that a broad sketch executed by some master is a hundred times more precious and more powerful than any photograph can ever be. That exact imitation is not the true end of art is proved, also, by the fact that many forms of art are purposely inexact. In sculpture, that seeks to repro-

duce the likeness of men and women, one of the great charms of the work is that there is no attempt to reproduce color. The purity of the white marble or the rich tone of the bronze lends a dignity and a chasteness that would be utterly destroyed by any attempt to color the statue in imitation of the model. The advantage of the drama, which is the highest, or at least one of the highest, forms of poetic art, is that instead of making the characters speak in ordinary prose, it can give them the less natural but more exalted form of speech called verse. The deviation from exact imitation in this art is the source of one of its chief beauties. But in the graphic arts themselves we have abundant proof that exact imitation is neither necessary nor desirable. Meissonier painted with wonderful minuteness and extreme attention to detail, but seldom attempted to reproduce the exact size of any figure or object. In a pencil or charcoal drawing,

the artist not only commonly reduces the size of his model but inevitably has to forego the element of color, yet a broad pencil or charcoal sketch may be in every sense highly artistic and effective.

But since it is necessary to imitate something, to what must the imitation be applied? To the relationships of the different parts of the model. If, for example, the subject be that of a man in violent action, the artist, although he may reduce the magnitude of the figure, will keep the body in right proportion to the size of the head, the limbs in right proportion to the head and body, and so throughout the entire drawing, keeping each part in proportion to the whole. He will also reproduce the proportionate angles at which the various limbs are set, thus imitating not only the form but the attitude of the figure as well.

But to produce the truest kind of art, this method of procedure must be somewhat modified. It is the function



of art to say something more perfectly or more beautifully than Nature herself says it. If, for instance, the subject be that of a man in violent action provoked by anger, the artist will select those features which especially express anger, and exaggerate, or, at least, emphasize, them and their characteristic attitudes in such a manner as to intensify the expression of that emotion. If the artist be a landscape-painter, he will, of course, seek his inspiration out-of-doors in the presence of Nature. It seldom happens, however, that Nature presents any scene in which there is such a state of harmony as is required in a picture. Let us suppose, however, that the landscape before him is especially expressive of repose. As he sketches, he will give particular prominence to the lines and objects that suggest repose, and either subordinate, or sacrifice, or omit entirely all lines and objects whose presence tends to weaken or destroy the reposeful effect. Often

a landscape is full of what artists call "good sketching material" without having anywhere the character of a picture. There may be beautiful rocks, noble trees, richly-colored fields, picturesque cottages, streams of water, and other interesting objects, but all so disposed that from almost no point of view a good pictorial composition can be made by literal imitation. The artist then simply paints the character of the place, introducing such lines, such objects, and such color effects as are suggestive of the spot where he is sketching. In other words, he employs the principle of selection, looking for those things that are essential to the expression of the character of what he is seeking to represent, and omitting those that are merely accidental

#### IV.



It is precisely this matter of artistic selection that most people fail to understand.

The Pre-Raphaelite influence upon American painters.

No doubt the eloquent, but oftentimes erroneous, teaching of John Ruskin in regard to the study of Nature has misled both artists and laymen. It is certain that in France it was more generally understood that it is the function of the artist to interpret Nature, not, as was a long time thought in England, to make a literal copy of her.

During the middle of the nineteenth century many of our American painters were strongly influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite movement in England, and, like the Pre-Raphaelites, made the least possible use of the principle of selection, and painted Nature with literal fidelity to detail, overlooking the fact that the peculiar effect of Nature resides in the whole and not in the parts.

## V.

The Barbizon  
influence intro-  
duced by William  
M. Hunt.



**I**T was a fortunate day for American art, therefore, when the influence of the great French painters, who interpreted Nature more broadly and more rationally, was brought to our shores by one of the greatest of our native artists, WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT. Born at Brattleboro, Vermont, on the 31st of March, 1824, Hunt became a student at Harvard College at the age of sixteen. At the age of twenty-two he began to study sculpture in Düsseldorf, where he remained nine months. At the end of that time he decided to give up sculpture and devote himself to painting. He accordingly went to Paris, and entered Couture's studio. Couture's method of instruction, however, was not the kind that would enable a pupil to develop a style of his own, nor did Hunt find the atmosphere of Cou-

ture's atelier altogether congenial. He went to Barbizon, in the Forest of Fontainebleau, and became the reverent disciple and intimate friend of Jean François Millet. To him he owed his greatest inspiration, though he was in no sense a mere imitator of his master.

Hunt was one of the first men to recognize the high order of Millet's art. Long before France herself had acknowledged his greatness, Hunt was buying some of his pictures, and finding purchasers for others. It was largely through his efforts, also, that America was the first country to appreciate and patronize the great painter of French peasants. To have had the rare insight to discern artistic genius where an artistic nation had denied its existence or, at least, neglected it, and to have known how to inspire others with an enthusiastic admiration for that genius, were unmistakable signs that Hunt himself was born to become a leader in the

world of art. After a ten years' sojourn in Europe he returned to his native country, and in 1855 opened an art school in Boston and introduced the Barbizon methods of painting in America. Being possessed of a charming personality and a remarkable gift of imparting his ideas to others, he soon became the admired master of a large number of disciples, over whom he exerted a powerful influence.

As an artist, Hunt was a man of great versatility and power. He painted landscapes, portraits, *genre* subjects, and subjects purely ideal. He was also a mural decorator, his most noted work being the allegorical subjects, "The Flight of Night" and "The Discoverer," on the walls of the State Capitol at Albany, N. Y. Among his well-known pictures are "The Bugle-call," "The Drummer Boy," and "The Bathers."

Hunt did not believe, as some people in this country do, that American

artists ought to forego the advantages of European study, lest they become imitators of the French or the Germans. He knew that the great genius in any form of art always owes much to the work of his predecessors, and that it is by first assimilating all that others have discovered and learned that an original mind becomes best equipped to develop a new mode of expression or to give utterance to a new conception of life or of art. He knew that to condemn the American artist to the futile task of rediscovering for himself the art principles, and the methods of work gradually evolved by European artists in the course of several centuries would merely delay the progress of art in this country. He knew, too, that the young artist who has a strong individuality and who really has something to say to the world, cannot help saying it in his own way, and that his way of saying it will be all the more forceful because of the perfect mastery

of the technique of his art. He therefore counseled the most thorough study and the broadest possible culture as the best foundation upon which to build original work. Hunt died in 1879. Since his death, our native artists, who formerly went to Germany or to Rome, have, like him, sought their education for the most part in France, where the art-impulse to-day is stronger and the advantages for art-study better than in any other country.



## VI.



**T**HAT a truly original mind will find out its own method of expression, and know how to profit by the study of other artists without imitating them, is shown in the case of ALEXANDER H. WYANT, one of our best landscape-painters. Wyant was born in 1839 at Port Washington, Ohio. His first occupation was that of a sign-painter in his native village. He went to Cincinnati and painted some pictures which pleased the art patrons of that city and brought him enough money to enable him to go to Europe. He studied at Düsseldorf for some years under Hans Gude, and afterwards went to London, where he studied the works of Turner and Constable. He returned to America and settled in New York. Although his special training as an artist was received at Düsseldorf,

The Genius of  
Wyant.

nothing could be further from the Düsseldorfian method of painting than Wyant's. His style was distinctly his own, the outgrowth of a strong individuality and an earnest and sincere study of Nature.

After examining a number of his pictures, you are especially struck with Wyant's manner of treating the light. In one picture you will look through a dark wood at a patch of sky in the middle filled with luminous white clouds of almost dazzling brilliancy. In another, your eye travels up a road passing along the edge of a forest and meets a luminous sky at the distant horizon. In still another, the sky is filled with storm-clouds all dark and threatening, except in one spot which glows white with a last gleam of the already hidden sun. Again, instead of this concentration, there is a remarkable diffusion of light throughout the entire picture. And yet Wyant was not a chiaroscurist, getting his effects by

violent contrasts. On the contrary, he was an excellent colorist, capable of the most delicate as well as the most powerful effects. Many of his landscapes are truly idyllic in character and full of tender and poetic sentiment. Others are beautiful interpretations of the more dramatic moods of Nature, or representations of the wild and rugged scenery of the Adirondacks. In all, even in his ideal compositions, there is great truth to Nature without the slightest suggestion of vulgar realism.

Wyant worked both in water-color and in oil, and was a member of the National Academy of Design, and one of the first members of the American Water-Color Society. He died in 1892. One of his most distinguished pupils is BRUCE CRANE, who has been very fitly called "a poet in landscape," and who at the early age of twenty had already attained a national reputation.

## VII.

Inness, the virile  
and versatile  
interpreter of the  
American land-  
scape.



HE great master among American landscape-painters was the late GEORGE INNESS. To study his career as an artist is to note the successive steps in the growth of an extraordinary and original mind. Many artists, having learned the technics of their art from some master, are content forever afterwards to paint in his manner. Others, again, develop a style of their own, by which they allow themselves to be mastered in turn and from which they never again deviate. Inness, on the contrary, not only owed his art-education almost entirely to himself, but, not satisfied with what he had yet attained, never relaxed his inquiries into the mysteries of his craft and made constant progress to the end of his career. Born at Newburg, N. Y., May 1, 1825, he took his first drawing lesson

at the age of fourteen. About two years later he was placed in a store in Newark, N. J., but he had no aptitude for commercial life, and in a month he had driven all the customers away. He was next employed by a firm of map-engravers in New York, where he remained for one year. His health was always delicate, and the confinement here was more than he could endure. Returning to Newark, he began to make sketches from Nature and thus discovered his true vocation. He was now about eighteen years of age. He studied painting for a few months under Gignoux in New York, the only regular instruction he ever received, and then opened a studio of his own. He had the good fortune to sell many of his pictures, and to win the warm friendship of a wealthy gentleman, who offered to send him to Europe. He went to Rome and spent some fifteen months in Italy. About a year and a half later, at the age of twenty-

five, he went to Europe again, and remained in France for a year. Returning to his native country, he began his long series of interpretations of the American landscape, no less remarkable for the great range of sympathy which they reveal with Nature's various moods than for the power and thoroughly individual style of their execution.

Notwithstanding his always delicate health, Inness was a prodigious worker. At the beginning of his career, when sketching out-of-doors, he used to draw every stick and stone in the landscape before him. By this means he acquired a most intimate knowledge of all the forms in Nature, the peculiar structure of every kind of tree and shrub, of every flower and weed, of every rock and boulder. In his early paintings, which are frequently large and almost panoramic in character, the effect of this kind of study was an undue attempt to delineate every detail of

grass and foliage, although his pictures were always perfect in tone and excellent in composition. As he advanced in his work, he developed in a fuller degree the art of selection, and gradually sacrificed many of the lesser truths of Nature in order more powerfully to represent the larger ones. The result was a greater breadth and simplicity of effect and a more direct appeal to the emotions of the spectator.

In Inness's work we find an interpretation of every one of Nature's moods, of every season of the year, of every hour in the day. Bright days, gray days, lowering days, days of storm and tempest; the first days of spring, with her tender young shoots and delicate lace-like foliage; June, with her thick-leaved woods and her flowery meadows; full-grown summer, in all her many glories; ripe autumn, with her mellow harvest, and her abundance of red and scarlet and yellow and gold; naked

winter woods and snow-clad fields and ice-bound streams ; the tender light of the early morning hours, the midday glare, the warm glow of summer afternoons, the splendors of the sunset, gray twilight, mellow moonlight, sober night — all have found their sympathetic interpreter in the great poet-painter Inness, who had the gift to see beauty not only in the stately forests and sweeping meadows but in the humble American village and the prosaic manufacturing town as well. Possessing a rich and exalted imagination, he knew how to reconcile ugly factory buildings, smoky chimneys, and the modern utilitarian locomotive with the poetic beauties of an American landscape and an American sunset. During his several visits to Europe he painted the romantic scenes of Italy and France ; but his greatest glory is that he painted the American landscape in a truly American spirit. He has oftentimes been compared with the French painters



of the Fontainebleau-Barbizon school ; but, though he doubtless learned much by studying their pictures, his style is entirely his own. He excelled Daubigny in the range of his subjects, and was a better draughtsman than he. He painted sunsets with as great a power as Corot and excelled him in the painting of trees. If he did not paint animals with all the power of Troyon, it was because he generally used cows and sheep and domestic fowls in his landscapes as accessories merely. As a landscapist he is the superior of Troyon, whose painting of the sky is often sadly out of tone. He interpreted the American oaks and pines and birches in a style as truly personal and distinct as that of Théodore Rousseau. If he has not so much emotional power as Millet, it is because he was first of all a painter, while Millet was less a painter than a poet.

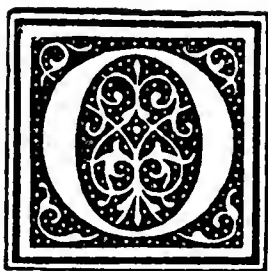
Inness was not only a hard worker, painting sometimes as much as fifteen

hours a day, but he also worked with great rapidity and often produced a masterpiece in a few hours. He was likely, however, to change a picture at any time, as new inspiration came to him, and he commonly had a number of pictures in progress, turning from one to the other as his emotion changed or the difficulties he encountered made him uncertain of how he ought to proceed. He allowed his emotions oftentimes to govern him so completely that what he started out to paint would have been utterly unlike the picture he did paint before he finished. When working in his studio, he would perhaps begin the day by composing a picture representing a spring morning; by noon it would perhaps have been converted into an autumn scene, and before night into a winter evening. He was a man of so many ideas that he was not content to work forever in one color scheme nor forever on the same subject. He never painted in any medium but

oil, but he experimented constantly, and if his work was not always of even excellence, it was at least endlessly varied and interesting. He died in Scotland in the summer of 1894. Few painters have thought more deeply on art than he, or illustrated their theories more successfully. He has exerted a strong influence on the present generation of American landscape-painters, who, without imitating him directly, have acquired much of his virility and his breadth of vision.

## VIII.

The originality of  
Whistler.



OF the painters living to-day perhaps none other has caused so great a stir in the art world or provoked so much discussion of art principles as JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER. Not only as a painter in oil, in water-color and in pastel, but also as an etcher and a master of the lithograph, he has produced work of such striking originality that critics and artists alike have failed to understand and been puzzled to know how to classify him, and he was at first as much condemned as he has since been admired and praised. Twenty years ago, John Ruskin, criticising one of Whistler's pictures, declared it to be equivalent to flinging a "pot of paint" in the public's face, and was thereupon sued by the artist, who complained that the criticism had damaged his reputation and injured his

business. The verdict was in favor of the plaintiff, although the amount of the damages awarded him was only one farthing; but during the trial no less an artist than Edward Burne-Jones was called in to pass his judgment upon the picture in question. He admitted that it was beautiful in color, but pronounced it utterly lacking in finish, and hence in no true sense a work of art. This interesting controversy is now a matter of history, and Whistler's own account of it is given in that unique book of his called "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies." To-day it is not difficult to find, even in the writings of English critics, expressions of amazement that there could have been enough stupidity to deny the superexcellent beauty of the picture which so excited the indignation of John Ruskin and the contempt of Burne-Jones. Mr. Whistler's genius has at last triumphed over the severest critics even in England, and, having won the fullest recognition for

his art in that country, he left London a few years since and moved his studio to Paris.

Born at Lowell, Mass., in 1834, the son of a famous American civil engineer, Mr. Whistler was taken to Russia at the age of eight, but brought back to America four years later and educated at West Point. At about the age of twenty-two he was studying under Gleyre in Paris, and a few years later began to send his pictures to the Salon. They were steadily rejected for several years, until, in 1863, the famous "Salon des Refusés" welcomed his work and hung a picture of his, called "The White Girl." This was his first opportunity to show to the public in Paris the quality of his genius, and his work not only made a sensation, but marked him as one of the most original artists of the day. He had now gone to London, and settled there, and in the succeeding years produced many notable works, among them "La Princesse

des Pays de la Porcelaine," exhibited at the Salon ; the "Symphony in White, No. 3"; "The Pacific," called "An Arrangement in Gray and Green"; "The Blue Wave"; "The Balcony," which he called "A Harmony in Flesh-color and Green"; and "Old Battersea Bridge." He also painted many portraits, among them the famous portrait of his mother and a portrait of Thomas Carlyle. Both of these were called "Arrangements in Black and Gray." They were first shown in London (1874), and then, some ten years later, at the Salon in Paris (1883 and 1884).

## IX.

Whistler's theory  
of art, as exempli-  
fied in his  
"arrangements,"  
"harmonies" and  
"nocturnes."



T will be observed that Mr. Whistler is fond of applying musical terms to his pictures, calling them "symphonies," "harmonies," "arrangements." A portrait by him is always an "arrangement,"—perhaps an arrangement in gray and yellow, or in brown, or in flesh-color and red, in brown and black, or in black alone, like his portraits of Henry Irving as Philip of Spain, and of Señor Sarasate. He has also named many of his pictures "nocturnes" and others "notes."

So far from being mere fanciful appellations these titles furnish the key to Mr. Whistler's theory of art. Rightly to understand this theory, it is necessary to consider the analogy between painting and music. Both are sensuous arts, the one appealing to our sense of beauty, either of form, of light and



shade or of color; the other, to our sense of beauty, either of tone-quality, of melody or of harmony. But painting is also, and, indeed, as generally practiced is, preëminently an articulate art; that is, it has the power to tell a story clearly, to convey a definite conception to the imagination, and thereby to awaken in the spectator the same emotion that the artist himself has experienced. Now, the means whereby a painter is enabled to tell a story are the elements of form, and of light and shade. He may tell a story with form alone, and express the beauty of the various shapes contained in his composition; if he add light and shade, his picture gains in power and definition. The element of color, however, is needed to make the fullest appeal to the emotions, for the æsthetic pleasure excited by color is greater than that imparted by form. If, on the other hand, the painter confines himself to the use of color alone, he may, indeed, create

a thing of beauty, but it will have a purely sensuous, inarticulate beauty, conveying no definite thought or sentiment or emotion, and in no sense telling a story. Now, a painting without suggested form of some kind is like a piece of pure music; for music, until wedded to poetry, is a wholly inarticulate art, though it may stir the emotions more powerfully than any arrangement, however beautiful, of color without form. What form and light and shade are to painting, namely, the story-telling or literary elements, that is what poetry is to music. Notice, now, how musical art is divided into different departments. There are musical compositions with no literary element whatever, like sonatas, symphonies, nocturnes, etc.; and there are musical compositions with a very definite literary element, telling a definite story and exciting a definite emotion, like songs, operas and music dramas. Thus music, which is primarily a purely sensuous, inarticulate art, may be made

articulate by joining it with poetry ; while painting, which is clearly an articulate art, may be made almost entirely sensuous by omitting, so far as possible, the articulate element of form.

Now, in Mr. Whistler's works the charm is preëminently a sensuous one. There is no attempt to tell a story, no desire to express a sentiment. In his paintings the color-interest is paramount to everything else. He wishes them to hold a place in pictorial art similar to that of symphonies, caprices and nocturnes in musical art, to please by virtue of their sensuous beauty and not because of any literary meaning. Even in his etchings, which have been universally admired, and pronounced by the most competent judges to be as perfect as anything of the kind ever done even by the great Rembrandt, the charm is rather in the exquisitely delicate effect of light and atmosphere, the spiritual loveliness of the scenes, and the mysterious simplicity with which

they are executed. In his paintings, he delights in producing the most delicate visions of color often with the smallest possible substratum of form, as in his nocturnes and notes; and in his portraits, into which the element of form must necessarily enter, he is not content with a mere surface representation of the subject, but paints the man as well as his features, and makes of the whole a beautiful arrangement of form and color in luminous air.

It is because that portion of the public, and especially of the English public, which takes an interest in pictures, has failed to grasp this conception of art that it has also failed to understand Mr. Whistler's beautiful "harmonies" and "nocturnes," and pronounced them ridiculous and their author eccentric. They expect a picture to tell them a story, and Mr. Whistler will not play the rôle of minstrel or troubadour, much less preach a sermon or illustrate a fable. He wishes his

paintings to be appreciated as paintings merely, and those who lack the culture or the technical training necessary to comprehend his finer and subtler art have remained insensible to the charm of its exquisite beauties.

Mr. Whistler himself has said :  
“ Art should be independent of all clap-trap — should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it, and that is why I insist on calling my works ‘arrangements’ and ‘harmonies.’ ”

That Mr. Whistler is correct when he asserts that painting should never seek to awaken any definite emotion, in other words, should never have a literary interest, may well be doubted ; but that he is thoroughly justified in confining his own efforts to the production of works of purely sensuous beauty,

there can, I think, be no doubt whatever. To sneer at him, or call him eccentric, because he adheres to this conception of art would be like quarreling with a musician who composed only sonatas, symphonies and the like, instead of oratorios and operas. Connoisseurs, artists, and unprejudiced critics have begun to discern that Mr. Whistler has worked in a department of the painter's art hitherto undeveloped among the artists of Europe and America. If he owes some of his inspiration to the Japanese, and has chosen for his subjects the same phases of Nature that so long have fascinated them, he has, nevertheless, produced in his many nocturnes a series of works absolutely original and unlike anything that has ever been done before. Mr. Whistler is, above all others, the interpreter of the tender, illusive beauty of the night. Before his time attempts to paint night effects were usually ugly and meaningless. Burne-Jones, indeed,

declared one of Mr. Whistler's most beautiful efforts to be simply another failure to paint night; but Mr. Jones, if he were still alive, would probably not dare to utter such a statement now. Mr. Whistler's art has educated the younger generation to a new perception of beauty. In his wonderful nocturnes he has fixed on canvas the blue transparent darkness of the night as it envelops the city and is reflected in the gas-lit river — the darkness through which you descry the dim forms of tall bridges and phantom boats, of illusive spires and dream-like palaces. Sometimes he depicts the strange pallor of a summer night, when the sky is only just obscured by a passing veil of darkness; sometimes the mysterious gloom of a night at sea, with foaming waves, dim lights, distant ships and a vague sense of the infinite; and sometimes his picture is mere luminous darkness in delicate gradation — purple sky above, purple below, a shadow in the

middle of the picture — a little less and there would be nothing.

His celebrated “Nocturne in Blue and Silver,” representing a fragment of old Battersea Bridge in London, is one of the pictures which Mr. Ruskin characterized as works “in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist approached the aspect of willful imposture” — a most intemperate criticism to have come even from the extravagant and self-contradicting Ruskin. Here, as everywhere, Mr. Whistler has shown that refinement of conception, that exquisite sensitiveness to all that is beautiful in nature, that delicate, subtle handling of light and color that distinguishes his work from the grossness and materiality of so many other painters. Against the cold, deep-blue sky looms up one pier and a part of the arch of the bridge — somewhat in the shape of the letter **T** — while beyond it the sky is spangled with the multitudinous silver sparks of a shower of falling fire-



works. Passing beneath the bridge, a mysterious barge, guided by a phantom-like figure, moves along on the bosom of the luminous river; while on the shore are seen the lights of the watching city, and then the purple illusive distance. The highest notes in this low-toned picture are but delicate attenuations of light, fading into that which is no longer light, producing the subtle, almost unearthly, charm which is peculiarly characteristic of Mr. Whistler's work, and especially of his nocturnes.

In his "Arrangement in Black and Gold," which he explains as a view in Cremorne Gardens with the fireworks, he has drawn with miraculous skill a shower of falling fire whirling through a black sky; while in another nocturne, rising and falling rockets are so skillfully drawn that the sparks of the ascending and descending showers of fire really seem to be in motion.

## X.

Whistler as a  
portrait-painter.



ALTHOUGH it is his nocturnes that distinguish Mr. Whistler as the great artist of the nineteenth century, he is also preëminent in his day and generation as a portrait-painter. If not quite the equal in all respects of the great Spaniard Velasquez, he often excels him in artistic perception and beauty of design. Unlike Velasquez, who sometimes copied his model with brutal frankness, Mr. Whistler always chooses with the nicest discrimination those characteristics which will best serve his artistic intention. In the portrait of his mother, which is now in the Luxembourg in Paris, he has achieved a triumph in the handling of low tones, in the decorative composition of his picture, and in the fidelity with which he has revealed the very soul of his model. It will be remembered that he calls it "An Arrange-

ment in Black and Gray," and in the rich deep black of the mother's gown and of the curtain that drops past the engraving on the wall, he has discovered possibilities and beauties in the handling of that color never before brought out by any other artist. There is also an extraordinary beauty in the management of the palpitating grays in the background, in the golden gray light that illumines the sober gravity of the portrait, and in the transition from gray to the highest notes in the composition as seen in the white cap, the lace cuffs, and the small white handkerchief. Mr. Whistler says he meant this merely as a decorative arrangement of color, and he has certainly achieved a marvelous decorative design in the arabesques on the curtain and in the exquisite grace with which he has balanced the dark, rich tone of the curtain on the left by the black of the dress on the right. It cannot be denied, however, that while painting this portrait the artist must

have been wholly absorbed in his model. In the marvelous tenderness with which he has treated the delicate hands lying half hid in the little lace handkerchief, and in the subtle outline of the grave, thoughtful face, he has told the story of the beautiful old age of a Puritan lady ; and although he thought the public ought not to know or care anything about the identity of the portrait, we feel that here his interest in his model has caused him to reveal his own soul more fully than anywhere else, and that here he has produced his greatest work in portraiture.

In his portrait of Miss Rose Corder, the chromatic scheme is an arrangement in black and brown. The life-size figure of a young woman stands on a brownish-gray floor against a background of airy obscurity, into which the outlines of her form seem here and there to melt and lose themselves without becoming altogether indistinct. Her gown is black, her jacket black,

trimmed with black fur and lined with white, and in her gloved right hand she holds a brown felt hat with a long feather. Her blond hair is rolled tightly on the top of her head. Only the profile of her face is seen, but it wears a calm and rather lofty expression, and is suffused with the rosy vibration of life. The portrait is an exquisite color-harmony in subdued tones, and the life-likeness of the figure, enveloped as it is by an atmosphere that seems black without being black, gives it a charm almost unearthly and spectral. So perfect a piece of painting is this that not the slightest trace of effort appears, no hint of the method by which it was accomplished. It reminds one of Mr. Whistler's own sententious statement: "The work of the master reeks not of the sweat of the brow — suggests no effort — and is finished from its beginning." This picture indeed would seem to have been created by an inspiration, and to have

sprung full-grown and perfect from the artist's mind.

Mr. Whistler's portraits are almost all painted in subdued colors. Some have thought that he paints flesh lower in tone than it is in nature, but he has met this criticism squarely by explaining that the common fault of the portrait-painter is the foolish attempt to make his man "stand out" from the frame, when, "on the contrary, he should really, and in truth absolutely does, stand within the frame, and at a depth behind it equal to the distance at which the painter see his model." "The frame," he says, "is the window through which the painter looks at his model, and nothing could be more offensively inartistic than his brutal attempt to thrust the model on the hither side of this window!"

It was a fortunate day for English art when Mr. Whistler took up his residence in London and determined to remain there in spite of the storm of

criticism and ridicule by which he was at first assailed. The influence of Ruskin and others had led English artists into a pernicious habit of copying Nature with a most inconsequent fidelity. Mr. Whistler has taught them that it is not *copying* but judicious *selection* that is needed in art. His method is more learned than that of any of his contemporaries, and is exerting a wholesome influence on the artists of to-day who are wise enough to study him as their master.

Sargent: his  
fortunate career  
and brilliant  
achievements.



## XI.

AMONG the younger generation of American painters who are living abroad none is more famous than JOHN S. SARGENT. Honors and fortune came to him earlier in life than to most artists. No doubt he was less of an innovator than Mr. Whistler, and, therefore, more readily understood. He is, nevertheless, an artist in the noble sense of the term, though he is still so young that it is impossible to determine how he will be ultimately classified among the men of his time. The works which he has produced during the last twenty years, however, show plainly that he possesses genius of a very high, if not quite the highest, order.

Mr. Sargent was born in Florence, Italy, of American parents, in 1856. His mother was an accomplished painter in water-colors, and from his



very infancy Mr. Sargent breathed an atmosphere of culture and art. He was educated partly in Italy and partly in Germany, and to-day he speaks and writes Italian, French, and German as well as English. He is a sincere lover of books and of the drama. He is possessed also of a considerable gift for music and performs on several instruments. Unlike most young Americans who set out to become painters or sculptors, Mr. Sargent has lived all his life in the world's great art centers, has become familiar with the many interesting and picturesque aspects of the life and customs of different nations and races, and knows thoroughly their distinguishing traits and characteristics. All these facts must be considered in studying Mr. Sargent as an artist, for they have all had an influence in molding his genius and determining the quality of his art.

Before he had attained the age of eighteen he had already had several years of art-study, beginning at the

Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. He drew cleverly with either pencil or charcoal, and worked in water-color and in oil. While he was still in his teens he spent a summer with his mother in the Tyrol. There he met the celebrated English artist, Frederick Leighton, who commended his sketches and gave him the heartiest encouragement to continue his studies. Not long after, his father took him to Paris and placed him under the guidance of the great French master, Carolus-Duran. His progress was so rapid that at the early age of twenty-two he received honorable mention at the Salon in Paris, where he exhibited a picture entitled "En Route pour la Pêche," representing some fisherwomen and children on the seacoast. The following year he sprang into fame by a dashing portrait of Carolus-Duran, painted in the master's own style. In each of the succeeding years he exhibited portraits and other pictures, both in oil and in water-color.

Among these was a picture called "El Jaleo," which created a sensation, and is now one of his most famous works. The subject is that of a Spanish girl dancing to the music of a company of singers and time-makers, and illustrates the artist's remarkable grasp of race characteristics. In 1889 he won the grand prize at the Paris Exposition, and was made a "Chevalier of the Legion of Honor."

Mr. Sargent now settled in London, and still further extended his fame by exhibiting a number of portraits and a charming picture called "Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose," representing two pretty girls in a flower garden at twilight in the act of lighting Chinese lanterns for some fête. This picture was so highly esteemed by the members of the Royal Academy that it was purchased by them on behalf of the Chantry Fund.

Mr. Sargent is never commonplace and always interesting. There is an in-

telligence, a dash and a brilliancy in his work which at once distinguish it from that of ordinary men. He has an extremely delicate sensitiveness to all that is artistically beautiful, and a marvelous gift for finding effects that are rare and novel. His style was, of course, formed by his first great teacher, Carolus-Duran, and, like him, he lays on his color with a broad, sure stroke, and in a manner that would lead you, on close inspection of any of his works, to say that the subject was merely "blocked out." As you step back, however, and view the work from the proper distance, you find it exquisitely beautiful in tone, and richly suggestive and complete. Mr. Sargent has studied, in turn, the methods and the work of Carolus-Duran, of Édouard Manet, of Vierge, of the great Spaniard Goya, and of Claude Monet, and from each he has wrested something to add to his own artistic resources. Indeed, he has made himself such a master of the technique of his art that

he is often tempted to imitate the style of other painters, and sometimes to undertake daring and difficult effects, more, it is to be feared, for the sake of overcoming the difficulties of the task than of expressing some particular artistic conception. When he imitates, he always adds something of his own that gives a novelty and a distinction to all he produces. When his apparent purpose is merely to accomplish some difficult feat, to evolve some startling chromatic scheme, he incurs the inevitable risk of producing a picture which, while it may excite admiration or astonishment, still fails to persuade and to satisfy. For when expression outruns thought it ceases to charm ; or, rather, it is no longer true expression. Mr. Sargent, however, has so rich an imagination, and is so full of resources, that everything he does must necessarily be of a very high order and command the respect, if not always the unqualified praise, of the most critical judges.

Mr. Sargent's career has been a cosmopolitan one. His early successes were made in France, and he has now for some years been one of the most fashionable and distinguished portrait-painters in London. Some of his very best portraits, however, were painted in the United States. Among these are the celebrated portrait of Beatrice, the little daughter of Mr. Goelet of New York, and the portrait of La Carmencita, the tall, slender *danseuse*, whom he has posed so skillfully with arms akimbo. This latter picture was painted in New York, and first shown publicly at an exhibition of the Society of American Artists, of which Mr. Sargent is a member. It was afterwards exhibited in Paris, where it created a sensation, and was bought by the French Government and placed in the famous gallery of the Luxembourg.

Perhaps nothing that Mr. Sargent has ever done is more remarkable than the great mural paintings placed a few years

since in one of the halls of the Boston Public Library. These are allegorical or symbolical in character, consisting of a frieze, a lunette and a ceiling arch. The frieze represents the twelve Jewish prophets. Mr. Sargent's vigorous conception of these grand characters has now become well known through photographic reproductions. The lunette represents the Jews in subjection to the Egyptians and Assyrians, typified by figures of Pharaoh and the Assyrian king. In the ceiling arch are represented the heathen gods of the ancient world, with symbolical interpretations of ancient creeds. The whole design is intricate and full of significance, the execution masterly, both in drawing and in color. It is such work as could have been produced only by an artist of exceptional intellectual refinement, and a strongly creative imagination.

Mr. Sargent is now in the middle of life and in the fullness of his power. His early manhood has been marked

by great artistic achievements; his future gives promise of still greater achievements.



## XII.



AMERICAN artists have often been reproached for not confining themselves more strictly to American subjects.

Edwin Lord Weeks, an American interpreter of Oriental subjects.

They are reminded that the landscape of America is as beautiful and as varied as in any other country in the world ; that American history is rich in heroic incidents and intensely dramatic in character ; that, if American life is not at all points so picturesque and romantic as life in the old world, it is at least better understood by the American, and hence more likely to be interpreted by him with success. These critics, in their zealous desire to hasten the day when we shall have a distinctively national art, forget that the artist paints what attracts him most, and if he is to express the best that is in him, he must be allowed to follow the bent of his own genius.

They seem to think, too, that art to be strictly characteristic of the nation by which it is produced must necessarily represent only the various aspects of its political or social condition, or the features of the territory which it occupies. But are not the intellectual and the spiritual life of a nation to be interpreted, too? And does not an American artist's impression of a foreign scene or a foreign incident reveal something of the mental life of the nation of which he is a part? At any rate, some of our most gifted artists are devoting their lives to painting foreign scenes and foreign subjects.

EDWIN LORD WEEKS has found his field in Northern Africa and the Orient. He is a landscape- and figure-painter, who is particularly famous for his pictures of life in Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus, Tangier and India. He was born in Boston in 1849, and studied in Paris at the École des Beaux Arts, and afterwards under Léon Bonnat and Gérôme.

At the age of twenty-nine he began to exhibit at the Salon and continued to do so for six years ; his subjects being from Tangier and Morocco. The next year he sent to the Salon a picture whose subject was found in India, and which was entitled a "Hindoo Sanctuary at Bombay." In the two succeeding years he exhibited a large picture called "Le Dernier Voyage," a souvenir of the Ganges, and "The Return of the Mogul Emperor from the Grand Mosque of Delhi." Others of his famous pictures are called "Jerusalem from the Bethany Road," "Pilgrimage to the Jordan," "Scene in Tangier," "Alhambra Windows," "Arab Story Teller," and "A Moorish Camel Driver."

Mr. Weeks is a skillful draughtsman and an excellent colorist. He handles vast and intricate scenes with perfect facility and remarkable effectiveness. No one has excelled him in the unhesitating directness with which, in his scenes of Hindoo life, he has treated

the grand architectural backgrounds with their multicolored richness and splendor of detail. In his large picture called "Le Dernier Voyage" he has accomplished a difficult feat with perfect success. In the foreground of the picture there is a small barge crossing the sacred Ganges River, and bearing three figures, an oarsman near the bow and two Hindoo fakirs. Of these, one is lying down at the point of death, and his comrade, who sits by his side, is taking him to the holy city of Benares, that he may there breathe his last on the bank of the river. The background is occupied by the picturesque Oriental city with the intricate forms of temples, pagodas and funeral pyres, and groups of fakirs and men of every class sheltering themselves from the blazing sun under large white umbrellas; yet all this detail, though treated with perfect fidelity, does not thrust itself forward nor usurp the interest that should attach to the figures in the fore-

ground. The composition shows Mr. Weeks's power to handle a dramatic Oriental scene, and give it the charm of its Oriental color and atmosphere.

### XIII.

An American  
painter of French  
peasants.



**HARLES SPRAGUE PEARCE** has also been attracted by foreign subjects, but of a very different kind from those selected by Mr. Weeks. He has painted portraits and figure subjects, but has made his greatest success picturing the rustic landscape and the peasants of northern France. Mr. Pearce was born in Boston in 1851. He studied under Léon Bonnat in Paris, and at the age of twenty-five exhibited a portrait at the Salon. During the next few succeeding years he sent figure subjects to the Salon, all painted more or less in the style of Bonnat. He had not yet fully developed his own individuality ; but when he turned his attention to rustic subjects, he displayed all the technical skill, close observation and simple handling characteristic of the modern French school, but with a touch of sen-

timent dominating the general realism. He is perhaps seen at his best in a picture exhibited at the Salon and called "Une Bergère," which is a souvenir of Picardy. The scene is a gently-sloping hill, with an irregular path climbing between stubble fields to the distant horizon. A flock of sheep is scattered about and browsing, while in the foreground stands a young shepherdess with both hands resting on her staff. The figure is painted with great skill and not without a touch of pathos in the attitude and in the rather weary, listless expression of the face. The picture, as a whole, is pervaded by a feeling of space and open air and a gray, palpitating atmosphere. If Mr. Pearce has not found a new field in which to work, he is at least thoroughly successful in painting what attracts him most, and is making valuable additions to American art. His pictures have been awarded prizes and medals at exhibitions held in Paris, Berlin, Munich,

Ghent, Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta and San Francisco. He has also been made a member of many art societies at home and aboard.



## XIV.



RIDGWAY KNIGHT is another American artist who loves to paint French peasants.

The idealism of  
Ridgway  
Knight.

His art-training began in Philadelphia, but was continued in Paris under Gleyre, and later under the great Meissonier at Poissy. In his interpretation of French peasant life he is disposed to select and give emphasis to the bright and cheerful characteristics and seeks to charm the spectator rather than to sadden him, like Millet, by portraying only the hard lot of country folk who toil on in a manner utterly cheerless and resigned. Mr. Knight is an idealist, attracted only by what is beautiful and amiable in his subjects. One of his pictures, called "L'Appel au Passeur," exhibited at the Salon, represents two buxom peasant women on the banks of the Seine calling with voice and gesture to the ferryman on

the opposite side. Both are carrying empty baskets and appear to be returning from the market, whither they had gone to sell the products of the farm. They have a cheerful, prosperous air, and suggest the healthfulness and wholesomeness of country life rather than its weary monotony and endless toil. The open-air effect of the picture is excellent, and imparts a feeling of the fullness and joyfulness of a perfect summer day.

## XV.



UNLIKE Mr. Knight, J. GARI  
MELCHERS, another Ameri-  
can artist who spends most  
of his time abroad, delights  
in ugliness and realism, painting by pref-  
erence Dutch subjects and selecting for  
his models the homely and careworn  
faces and figures of Dutch peasants and  
sailors.

An American  
painter of Dutch  
subjects.

Mr. Melchers was born in Detroit, Mich., and received his artistic training under Boulanger and Lefebvre in Paris. In 1886 he received honorable mention at the Salon, where he exhibited a large painting called "Le Prêche." Two years later he exhibited at the Salon a picture of "Dutch Pilots," seated about a table in an inn, comfortably smoking and carving models of boats. At the Universal Exhibition of 1889 he was represented by both these works, and a very large painting called the "Com-

munion," representing the interior of a Dutch church, with a score of life-size and very ugly figures.

Mr. Melchers has the modern French painter's way of looking at Nature, and interprets his subjects with all the modern French painter's technical skill. It may even be doubted whether any French artist paints figures with greater realism than he. We may wish, indeed, that since he carries his work to the point of almost complete illusion, he would paint faces and forms that were beautiful and interesting in themselves, rather than the dull, parchment-like features of aged and ignorant peasants. It must nevertheless be said that all his pictures are rich in local color; that he gives character and significance to the pose and grouping of his figures; that there is a masterly directness and certainty in his drawing; a simplicity and strength in his painting, and always a perfect observance of the relative values throughout the composition.

Mr. Melchers has the courage to be independent and individual. His artistic conceptions are never commonplace, while his knowledge and his technique are at every point adequate to the perfect carrying out of all he conceives. He holds to-day a distinguished place among the painters on both sides of the Atlantic. His work has won medals and prizes in Amsterdam, Munich, Paris, Berlin, Antwerp and Philadelphia, and he has been made a member of many of the principal art societies in Europe and America. He has also the special distinction of being represented, like Whistler and Sargent, in the Luxembourg in Paris.

## XVI.

William M. Chase,  
the master  
technicist.



HERE are painters, as there are poets and musicians, whose chief excellence lies in a perfect mastery of the technique of their art. They are men who interest us less by what they say than by their manner of saying it. The pleasure derived from their work, though it is of a different kind, need, however, be no less genuine than that excited by the deep thought or strong emotion of more imaginative artists. There are poets who, though possessed of no remarkable creative power, yet have an extraordinary charm because of their exquisite diction, the music of their verse, and the perfect adaptation of form to thought and sentiment; and this charm is not only felt by lovers of poetry in general, but acknowledged by brother poets and fair-minded critics. Much the same is true of musical com-

posers and executants. All the arts admit of many styles of expression, and each style is good in itself if rightly understood. Variety, indeed, is one of the principal sources of pleasure in every art, and whoever withholds his sympathy from all but a few favorite forms of art expression and refuses to learn to recognize what is good in others, simply narrows his artistic judgment and limits the range of his æsthetic enjoyment.

Among our American painters, WILLIAM M. CHASE holds the place of the consummate technician. In him the executive talent is far more prominent than the creative. It is his special forte to interpret by means of pigments the external aspects of Nature, to render the effects of light and color and texture. He cares little for imaginative or symbolical subjects. He is not a dreamer who endeavors to fix on canvas the fantastic creations of his brain. His art is almost wholly objective. What-

ever catches the light or presents an interesting note of color possesses for him a charm which he renders always with unerring skill. He delights in still-life subjects as much as in figures or landscapes, and paints a group of vegetables or an old brass kettle or Monday's wash hung out in the sun to dry with as much enjoyment as the face of a beautiful woman or the cloud-shadows chasing each other across a sunny field. He has never found it possible to limit himself to a specialty, like the artists who paint only cattle or sheep or summer woods. It is his boast that he can paint as well when the mercury is down to zero as in the month of June or August. He is not dependent upon any particular time or place for his inspiration. There are interesting effects of light around us at almost all times if we have but the eyes to see them, and, like Chase, the skill to fix them on paper or canvas. And with the power to render adequately all that



he sees, Chase is never at a loss for material. He cares little for subject or composition, as those words are understood by artists. Like Whistler, he rather disdains the story-telling element in a picture, and seeks first of all to present the sensuous beauty of what attracts his eye. In a word, he is distinctively a *painter*, delighting in the tools of his art, and handling his medium of expression with masterly skill.

Mr. Chase was born in Franklin County, Indiana, in 1849. In his twentieth year he determined to become an artist, and went to New York, where for two years he studied in the schools of the National Academy and in the studio of J. O. Eaton. He then removed to St. Louis, and there practiced his art, painting still-life subjects and some portraits. His work sold readily, and he prospered so well that in another year he was able to secure enough commissions to warrant his going to Europe

for further study. At the age of twenty-three, therefore, he entered the Academy in Munich, and, with characteristic earnestness, began again at the very foundation, working himself up from the antique class. During the next six years he not only absorbed all that his teacher, the celebrated Piloty, had to impart, but he constantly studied the Dutch and Flemish masterpieces preserved in the Munich galleries. Under these influences he could not fail to become a good technician. The great aim in the Munich studios is to acquire a free and vigorous handling of the brush, and the paintings in the public galleries are for the most part the works of men like Rubens, Hals, and Rembrandt, who were all supreme technicians. During this time, Mr. Chase painted such pictures as "The Court Jester," "The Turkish Page," "Ready for the Ride," and "The Dowager," all of them excellent examples of his early style as influenced by his Munich training.

His later style shows that he has gained much from other sources. He has never ceased to study the work of the world's great masters. He has visited all the most important galleries in Europe, has copied the pictures in the museums in Venice, studied Velasquez in Madrid, and visited, year after year, the Salon in Paris. He has learned much from the modern French artists, and his style is now more French than Bavarian; so that, while his early work was all painted in sombre tones approaching blackness, his later work is generally in a high key and always full of light and color.

Mr. Chase's versatility is seen both in the variety of subjects he handles and in the different media in which he works. He paints still-life, *genre*, portraits, and landscapes with equal skill and with equal delight; and whether it be oil, water-color, gouache, or pastel that he employs, whether a canvas six by ten inches or a canvas six by ten

feet, whether the surface be smooth as ivory or rough as coffee sacking, he always shows that each has its own special advantages and that something can be done with each that cannot be done so well with any of the others.

One of Mr. Chase's special delights is to paint a picture placed within a picture. Many of his own landscapes and figure pictures reappear as adorning the wall of an "interior with figures" forming the subject of another picture. In these the painted gold of the frame of the pictured picture is brought close to the real gold of the frame of the actual picture. The artist's representation of gold is thus made at once to challenge comparison with the real gold, and any shortcomings on the part of the artist would be strikingly apparent. In one of these compositions he has painted his own wife as seated before one of his own landscapes, but in the attitude of having just turned her eyes from the picture to reply to a remark

made by some one behind her. Here Mr. Chase has not only overcome the technical difficulty of painting the gold frame with sufficient skill to stand comparison with the real frame but he has also kept a definite sense of distance between the figure in the foreground and the picture in the background. There is, also, in the figure a suggested action combined with a feeling of repose ; while the face and the attitude tell plainly the simple story of the picture.

It has been objected by some intelligent critics that such pictures as this are mere devices of the artist to show his cleverness ; that, instead of expressing some sentiment or emotion to the observer, they simply fill him with a consciousness of the painter's technique. I have already hinted, however, that Mr. Chase has his limitations. Whoever wishes to enjoy his work must not seek in it what he does not pretend to give ; but accepting the artist as he is, and understanding his aim, one will find

in Mr. Chase, as one of his brother artists says, "A master painter, who does well all that he tries to do, and some things as well as any man living."

## XVII.



WHEN we come to study JOHN LA FARGE, who is *par excellence* the American colorist, we find a striking contrast to Mr. Chase. Mr. La Farge does not, like Mr. Chase, see merely the surface beauty of things, he has the finer insight that enables him to perceive the more hidden beauty of their spiritual significance. He is preëminently a creative artist, in the presence of whose glowing color harmonies the feelings are stirred and exalted, the sordid and the commonplace being forgotten in the contemplation of celestial beauty.

John La Farge,  
the American  
colorist.

Mr. La Farge was born in New York in 1835. The environment in which he lived from his earliest youth was fortunately such as to foster and develop to the utmost the strong sense of color with which Nature had endowed him.

His boyhood was spent in Newport, R. I., where he stored his visual memory with vivid impressions of the rich beauty of the landscape and the ever-changing aspect of the sky and the sea. With flowers he formed an intimate and loving companionship, and from them he learned the secret of delicate gradation and harmony of color. At the age of twenty-one he went to Paris and entered the studio of Couture. After a few weeks' time, his master recognized in him a young man of original genius and advised him to free himself from all studio influences and study alone by himself. La Farge returned to America. Here he formed a life-long friendship with William M. Hunt, who was, perhaps, the most original and spiritual artistic genius this country had yet produced. The influence of Hunt was to deepen and fix in La Farge his already strong natural tendency to seek for the religious aspect of life and nature. It must not be



supposed, however, that La Farge in any sense imitated his friend. He was too original and too independent to follow any other man, and belongs to no special school of art. He is, indeed, exceedingly difficult to classify as an artist, for he is neither the disciple of any school nor yet the founder of one. Most men of great originality and strong convictions seek to express their theories in a connected series of works, which are sure to bear a striking family resemblance to one another, and which other men, admiring the master, learn at last to imitate. The artistic performances of Mr. La Farge, however, are of an extent and variety seldom found in the works of any modern artist. He is at once a painter of landscapes, of flowers, of portraits, of *genre* subjects, and of subjects religious, and purely ideal and imaginative; he has worked in oil, in water-color and on wood; he is a mural decorator, a painter in stained glass, and a sculptor. In all of

these forms of art he has shown his individuality and power of thought. In none has he so persistently followed out any one theme as to make it easy for others to discover his mode of thinking or to copy his manner. His greatness lies not so much in any startling innovations that he has made in art as in the earnestness and loftiness of his purpose, his remarkable creative power, the spirituality of his conceptions, his depth and sincerity of feeling, and in his marvelous richness and beauty of color.

Among the earliest works with which Mr. La Farge came before the public were a number of notable landscapes. These are admirable examples of the painter's peculiar skill in the treatment of light and color-values through all their subtle gradations. One of these is a view from a hill near Paradise, Newport, a most daring and difficult composition, representing land stretching out into unending distance, flooded

with a strong midday light. Others are winter scenes, in which he has presented all the subtle and delicate gradations of the color of snow while, at the same time, preserving its apparent whiteness and purity. Beginning in the foreground with a faint tinting of pink, he gradates the color into green, putting here and there a touch of deepest blue in the depressions of the ground, and towards the edge of the horizon a slight hint of yellow; yet all these he keeps so carefully subdued as to make an *ensemble* of almost imperceptible color and to give the snow a look of interesting reality.

In none of these landscapes has he carried his work to a state of high finish. He has given breadth and a sense of largeness in brush work, but no hint of elaboration. In the work of Mr. La Farge the details are always subordinated and almost disdained. It is through color rather than by means of the drawing that Mr. La Farge seeks

to give his interpretation of any aspect of life or nature. It is one of his strongest convictions that color symbolizes character and can be made to express the hidden meaning of things. He has, therefore, reinforced his naturally quick perception of color by a careful study of its scientific use. To this he owes much of his originality in coloring, "the most striking features of which are his frequent use of a *crescendo* in his scale of tones, his constant habit of shading by most delicate gradations, and his delight in sharp juxtaposition of primaries." In the use of this last device he was probably influenced by the Orientalists, for he was at one time a close student of Japanese art and its laws of color.

In his flower pictures, Mr. La Farge has given us interpretations of the rose, the hollyhock, the water lily, the lotus and other blossoms, which are remarkable for their purity and charm of color, the flowers forming a theme for

a most delicate and refined harmony that addresses the eye with occult power.

As a painter of purely imaginative work, he has drawn some of his subjects from the realm of fairyland and witchcraft. "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," "The Wolf Charmer," "The Sorceress," "The Fisherman and the Genii," "The Siren's Song," are all works of the purest fantasy, yet each has a significance of its own and reveals an almost divine insight into the nature of things.

Before he had concluded his thirty-third year, Mr. La Farge's life had already been extraordinarily productive. Besides landscapes and flowers, he had made many drawings on wood and in water-color, in illustration of the poems of Browning and of an edition of Tennyson's "Enoch Arden," and of the "Songs of the Old Dramatists." He had also produced numerous portraits and studies of heads and figures,

in which there is the same depth and sincerity of feeling as in the landscapes, the same breadth of treatment. His portraits are generally painted in low tones, but the tones are rich and strong. The details are barely suggested, all power being focussed on the expression of character rather than on the features.

At this period he had already produced many important religious pictures also. Among these are a spirited head of "St. John the Baptist," and, as frescoes, pictures of "The Madonna," "The Crucifixion," and "The Ascension," besides other cathedral paintings. His highest note of power at this time was reached in a large picture called "St. Paul," painted as the altarpiece of a church. This is such a masterpiece as could have been produced only by a fervent believer. It is painted in the spirit of the great renaissance models, with all their breadth and largeness of treatment, their union of strength and

simplicity, but it in no wise suggests imitation, being original both in idea and in execution.

In this short discourse we could not trace the full history of this wonderful man's life and achievements. He has visited Europe many times; has sketched and painted in France, in Japan, in the islands of the Pacific, as well as in America. His growth as an artist has never yet suggested any limitations. He goes to Nature in the spirit of the investigator and discoverer, and is constantly finding new truth and beauty.

In 1876, he made the mural decorations for Trinity Church, Boston. Later, he made the decorations of St. Thomas's Church in New York, aided by his friend, the celebrated American sculptor, St. Gaudens.

During the last fifteen years he has painted comparatively few easel pictures, giving almost his entire time to mural decorations and stained-glass painting.

His two most noted public windows are the so-called "Blue Window" in Trinity Church, Boston, and the Harvard Memorial, or "Battle Window." In the magnificent residence of the late Cornelius Vanderbilt there are decorations by La Farge said to form as original and beautiful an *ensemble* as perhaps has been executed since the Renaissance. The stained glass used in the windows are from Mr. La Farge's own designs and factory.

In turning to glass as a medium of expression, Mr. La Farge was attracted by the unequalled opportunities it offered to a colorist. Actuated always by the highest art ideals, and looking to the betterment of his fellow men, Mr. La Farge believes that the standard of public taste in this country can be more quickly raised to a higher level by means of beautiful designs in colored glass windows, placed in the large churches and other buildings throughout the country, than by any other form



of art. In State buildings and in private mansions he has free play for the exercise of his pictorial and poetical fancy, while church windows offer a field for the religious subjects to which his own taste most strongly inclines him. Glass also offers to the colorist an opportunity for endless experiments in combinations, and Mr. La Farge was tempted by the hope of making some new discoveries of lasting worth and beauty. The splendid color-mosaics that he has produced display the same originality that distinguishes his earlier efforts with pigments, and to-day no other living artist has so perfect a command and comprehension of this brittle vehicle of opalescent glory.

## XVIII.

The Great American genre painter,  
Winslow Homer.



AMONG our representative American painters we have not only a great, probably the greatest, living interpreter, of pure sensuous beauty in Whistler, a great landscapist in Inness, a great technician in Chase, and a great colorist in La Farge, we have also a great *genre* painter in [WINSLOW HOMER, who is the most truly national of all our painters, and one of the few men living in the world to-day who can be called great artists. A profound original genius and wholly devoted to his art, Homer lives the life of a recluse in a lonely spot on the coast of Maine, his only companions being the rude toilers on land and sea, hunters, farmers, fishermen and sailors. It is the lives of these humble people that Homer interprets; and his works all testify to his power of close observation, his firm

grasp upon essential points of character, and his thoroughly individual manner of handling his subject. Indeed, his work never betrays the influence of any school of art or the method of any other artist. ¶

Born in Boston, February 24, 1836, Homer began to develop his gift for art in early childhood, obtained employment at the age of nineteen in a lithographing establishment in Boston, where he remained for two years, and at the age of twenty-three began to study at the National Academy of Design in New York, and under F. Rondel. Some eight years later he made a short trip to Europe, but it was after he had already fully developed his own method of painting. The style that he instinctively formed in his youth he has not since altered, never having been swayed or affected by any passing fad or fashion.

[During the Civil War, Homer painted, from personal observation, many

stirring scenes of the camps, the marches and the battlefields, and one of these, called "Prisoners from the Front," has long been celebrated as a unique work in American art. He has also given us faithful interpretations of the picturesque episodes of the negro life in those days ; has portrayed the rough existence of the American frontiersman, the rude exploits of the brave woodsman and hunter ; he has told on canvas many stories of the hard, and often heroic, lives of American fishermen and sailors ; and he has painted sympathetically and appreciatively many phases in the life of the farmer, so full of toil and struggle. He has depicted the peaceful scenes of American village life and of the country school. In short, whatever is idyllic or heroic in the lives of the common people of this great democracy, Homer has closely observed and painted as he has seen it, never softening a line or modifying a feature for the sake of producing a pleasing effect, but

always telling the essential truth of his subject in a style at once broad and masterful, sincere and noble.]

## XIX.

Marine, animal,  
figure, and land-  
scape painters.



IN this essay we can speak of only a very few of the noteworthy American artists: We must not fail to observe, however, that we have also many excellent marine painters, chief of whom is Alexander Harrison, famous for the splendor and mystery of his pictures of surf and sea by moonlight. The keynote of Mr. Harrison's art is truth to Nature. No other living painter knows so well as he how to reproduce the instantaneous phases of cloud and sky, the subtle lines of the curling wave, and the appearance of the wash sliding over the smooth sand with a mirror-like surface that reflects the sky. Others of our distinguished marine painters are W. T. Richards, Edward Moran, and M. F. H. De Haas. Among animal painters, if we have none of front rank, we have, at least, men like George

Inness, Jr., Peter Moran, Carleton Wiggins, and C. Morgan McIlhenny. In Edwin A. Abbey we have one of the four greatest draughtsmen of the nineteenth century, though we must admit that he has not as yet become a first-rate colorist. F. D. Millet and Henry Mosler are both accomplished storytellers on canvas, and Mosler has the distinction of being represented in the Luxembourg in Paris. W. T. Dannat and J. J. Shannon are famous portrait-painters. Elihu Vedder is noted for the imaginative and poetic character of his compositions ; George Hitchcock for his paintings of Dutch subjects, in which the color scheme is largely governed by a mass of flowers—a gardenplot of white lilies, or tulips, or a hedge of lilac bushes in full bloom. Among our best landscape painters we need to mention D. W. Tryon, in whose work there is a note of sadness and touching poetic sentiment ; R. Swain Gifford, who has painted the mountain scenery of Califor-

nia, the plains and meadows of New England, the landscape of old England, of France, Italy and Spain, and the desert wastes and tropical beauties of Africa; Thomas Moran, famous for his large canvases representing scenes in the Rocky Mountains and the Yellowstone Park; J. Francis Murphy, distinguished for the mellow, rich tones of his pictures; Charles Melville Dewey, in whose moonlight pictures there is exquisite delicacy of tone and tenderness of feeling; and Charles H. Davis, who is one of the great landscapists of the day. Some of our distinguished women painters are Cecilia Beaux, a portraitist famous on two continents; Rhoda Holmes Nicholls, Rosina Sherwood, and Clara McChesney.



## XX.

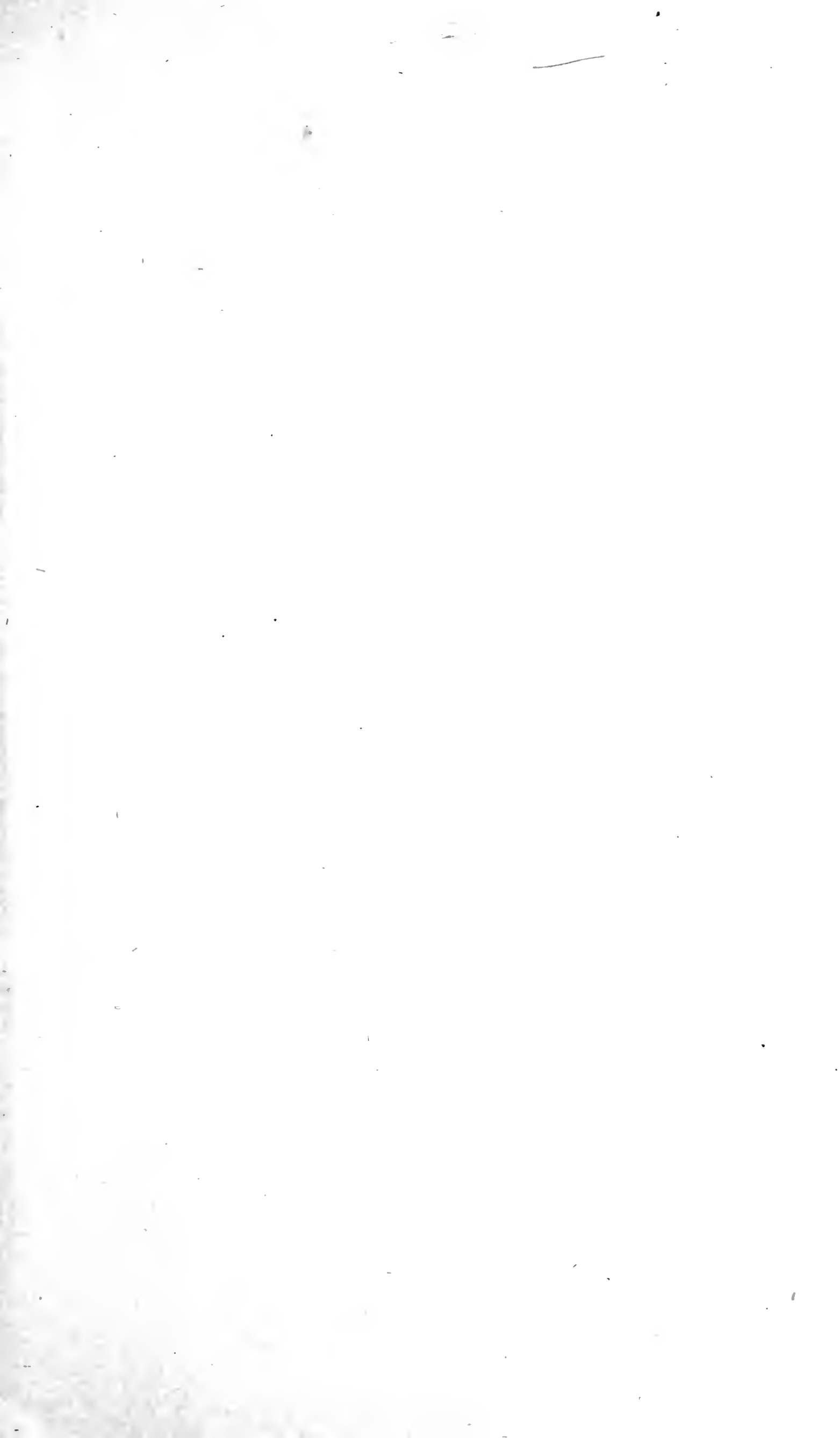
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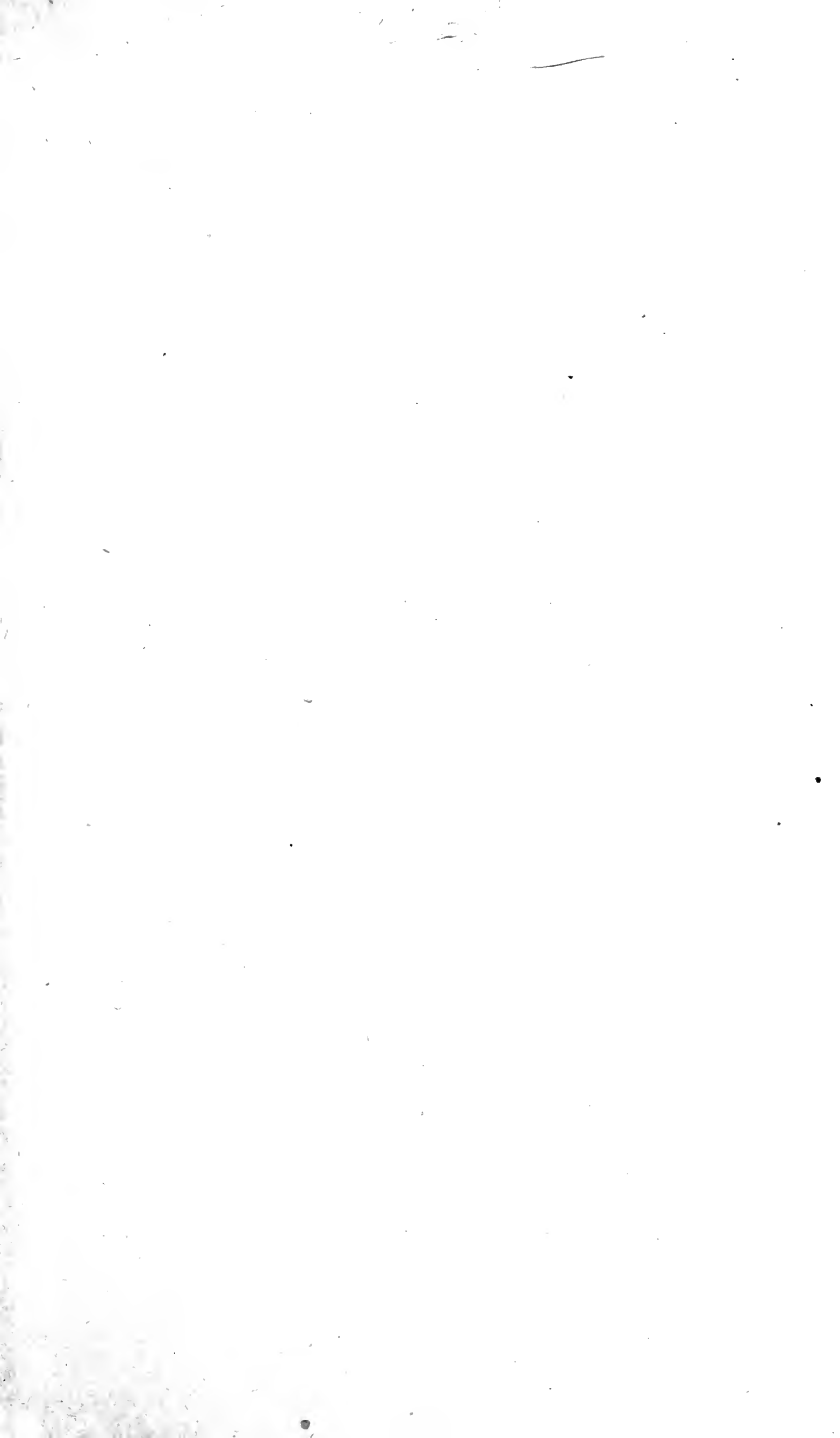
THE history of American art extends over two centuries ; but, although we have had distinguished painters since the days of Gilbert Stuart and of Copley, it was not until within the last thirty-five years that American artists have won the fullest recognition in the principal art centers of Europe. To-day, many of the greatest and most famous living painters are Americans, and nowhere are they held in such high esteem as in Europe and especially in France. Indeed, the French to-day ungrudgingly expect the Americans to supersede them before the end of another century. Our native painters have proved themselves possessed of the highest ambition and capable of the severe application characteristic always of true genius. What may they not hope to accomplish when there shall at

last have been made for them in their own country an artistic *milieu*, such as they are now obliged to seek in Europe? When in this work-a-day country of ours we have come at last to accept the dictum of Emerson, that "one ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities in the world," then, perhaps, our American life will be no longer "uninteresting," and Matthew Arnold's arraignment of our civilization no longer true.

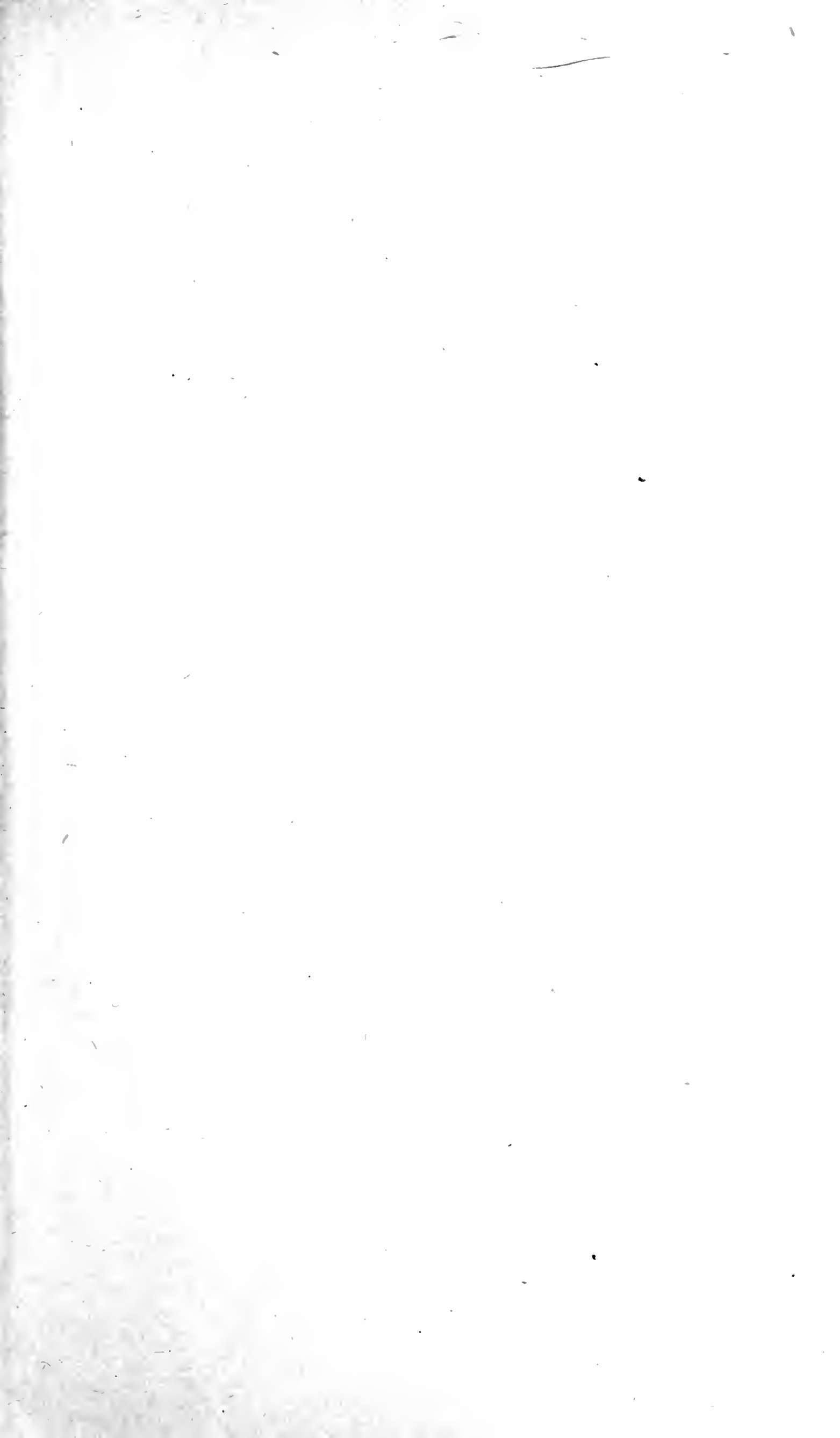
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